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260752Z Aug 05

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 003566

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USDOC FOR 6200/ITA/TD

FROM AIT KAOHSIUNG BRANCH OFFICE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: SENV ECON TW ESTH

SUBJECT: Diseased Pork Items Sold to Local Markets in Southern Taiwan

REF: Taipei 2997

¶1. Summary. Inspectors of Chiayi's Ministry of Justice Investigation Bureau (MJIB) recently raided an illegal abattoir in Chiayi County in southern Taiwan and seized over 10,000 kg of diseased pork items. The two brothers who ran the abattoir were arrested. The arrested suspects confessed that they had been conducting illegal operations for over two years. They bought diseased and dead pigs from the area's hog raisers, cut the pigs into pieces, and sold the portions to food processors and wholesalers in the Chiayi and Yunlin areas in southern Taiwan. The two brothers were charged for violating Taiwan's animal husbandry law and waste cleaning law. End Summary.

¶2. Chiayi MJIB agents, who received a tip about the illegal abattoir, visited the site and seized over 10,000 kg of diseased pork items on August 18, 2005. MJIB agents arrested two suspects who were running the unlicensed abattoir, which was located in a small and isolated village. The suspects confessed that they took over the abattoir from their father two years ago. They usually procured inferior pigs from local hog raisers, eliminated pig heads, skins, and organs, and then cut the remaining parts into pieces, and sold the meat to food processors. MJIB agents found that the purchasers usually deeply fried the pork pieces, cooked the meat with Chinese herbs, or made the pieces into pork meat balls, which were then sold to vendors at traditional open markets in Southern Taiwan's Yunlin County, Chiayi City, and Chiayi County.

¶3. MJIB agents also raided a food processing factory in Yunlin and discovered several thousand kilograms of unsafe pork which had already been made into ready-to-consume dishes for sale. The investigation into this case is on going and no arrests have been made to date.

¶4. Hung Shih-chao, Deputy Director of the MJIB Chiayi office estimates that the raided abattoir has handled approximately 300,000 kg of diseased hog meat in the past two years. Hung noted that local hog raisers usually work with local hog raising associations to dispose of dead pigs. Secretary General Huang Kai-fang of the Chiayi County Hog

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Raising Association said that the Council of Agriculture (COA) has assigned four plants operating in Yunlin County and Tainan County to assist in properly disposing of the diseased pigs. The Chiayi County Hog Raising Association has signed contracts with two out of four plants in Yunlin to provide assistance for its 240 members. Each member can use the association's services free of charge, but the members each pay the association NT\$500/month (USD15). According to Huang, the two plants handle approximately 110 tons of dead pigs each month. They usually transform the dead pigs into fertilizers and animal feeds.

¶5. According to Huang, Taiwan's pig farms currently are concentrated in the south: Pingtung County, Kaohsiung County, Yunlin County, and in the Chiayi area. The pig farms are currently raising around 6 million pigs total. There are around 300 registered pig farms and about 100 smaller, unregistered farms in the Chiayi area. There are currently about 400,000 pigs being raised in the Chiayi area. Because of financial limits on efforts to enforce regulations, some unregistered pig farms disregard COA's guidelines on how to dispose of dead pigs, and instead sell their sick and dead pigs to unlicensed abattoirs. Each sick or dead pig sells for between NT\$500 (USD15) and NT\$1000 (USD30).

¶6. Huang noted that currently there are fewer pigs being raised in Taiwan than in previous years. The eruption of the foot-mouth-disease (FMD) caused a ban on exporting Taiwan's pigs in 1998. Even though Taiwan's pigs are

vaccinated against the disease now, the ban is still in place. Huang said that the local pigs have been growing well since the introduction of the vaccine and he hopes that the ban will be lifted soon in order to bring prosperity to the local pig industry.

¶7. Comment. The present incident, along with the dioxin contamination of fish and fowl in Southern Taiwan (reftel) indicate that the local food supply is not entirely safe. Moreover, converting diseased animals into livestock feed can be a dangerous practice and does not fully eliminate the possibility of disease from sick pigs entering the human food supply. End Comment.

Thiele

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